



WISCONSIN COUNCIL ON INVASIVE SPECIES

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Westad Recognized as an Invader Crusader

Wisconsin's farmland and agricultural industry is continually threatened by the spread of invasive species and other noxious weeds. Kristin Westad, Project Coordinator of the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area is spearheading the invasive control efforts across 40,000 acres of privately-owned grassland and oak woods in Iowa and Dane Counties. Westad has been selected to receive one of the inaugural Invader Crusader Awards presented by the Wisconsin Council on Invasive Species.

The Invader Crusader Award was created to honor Wisconsin citizens and organizations for their significant contribution to the prevention or eradication of invasive species that harm Wisconsin's land and waters.

"It is important that we acknowledge the growing threat from invasive species to our natural resources and work to find solutions," said Governor Jim Doyle. Fortunately, invader crusaders such as Kristin Westad, and other award recipients are part of the solution. They are dedicated to protecting our environmental resources and raising awareness of this critical issue.

Westad heads a coalition that works to improve the habitat for grassland species, which includes removing invasive species. Not only has Westad led the effort on Nature Conservancy preserves, but also on private land where she has successfully partnered with local rural landowners. "I do it because I love the native species that make Wisconsin unique," says Westad. Control efforts on many fence lines separating farms have removed countless box elder trees, buckthorn, honeysuckle, and other invasive species, resulting in larger healthier grasslands.

Westad not only gets her hands dirty helping out during control efforts, she also educates farmers and the public about invasive species through a quarterly newsletter and face-to-face conversations. It is no surprise why biologist frequently cite the control efforts that she leads as a model to increase the scale at which conservation is done.

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“Kristin’s work with private landowners is critical to the success of the overall control effort,” says Steve Richter, Habitat Manager for The Nature Conservancy.

Although this was the first year of the award, the response was very positive.

“We received 31 nominations for 22 different people or groups,” explained Becky Sapper with The Nature Conservancy and invasive species council member. “There are so many that deserve recognition for their efforts to control invasive species in Wisconsin. We have high hopes that the number of nominations will continue to grow.”

Other recipients of the 2005 Invader Crusader Award are:

Betty Czarapata (posthumous award), Muskego

St. Catherine’s High School Environmental Club, Racine

Terri Lyon, Kiel

Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, Odanah

Kelly Kearns, Department of Natural Resources, Madison

Invasive species cause harm to ecological resources, causing losses in agriculture, forestry and fisheries.

For more information on the Wisconsin Council on Invasive Species or the Invader Crusader Award, call 715-682-5789.

This news release is sponsored by the Wisconsin Council on Invasive Species. The Wisconsin State Legislature created the Council, to which Governor Doyle appointed 13 members. The Council’s mission is to prevent and reduce the harmful impacts of invasive species on Wisconsin’s environment and economy, as well as human well-being. Funding for this news release was provided by the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program and the Natural Resource Foundation’s C.D. Besadny Conservation Grant Program.